

The Religion of the Future



By CHARLES W. ELIOT

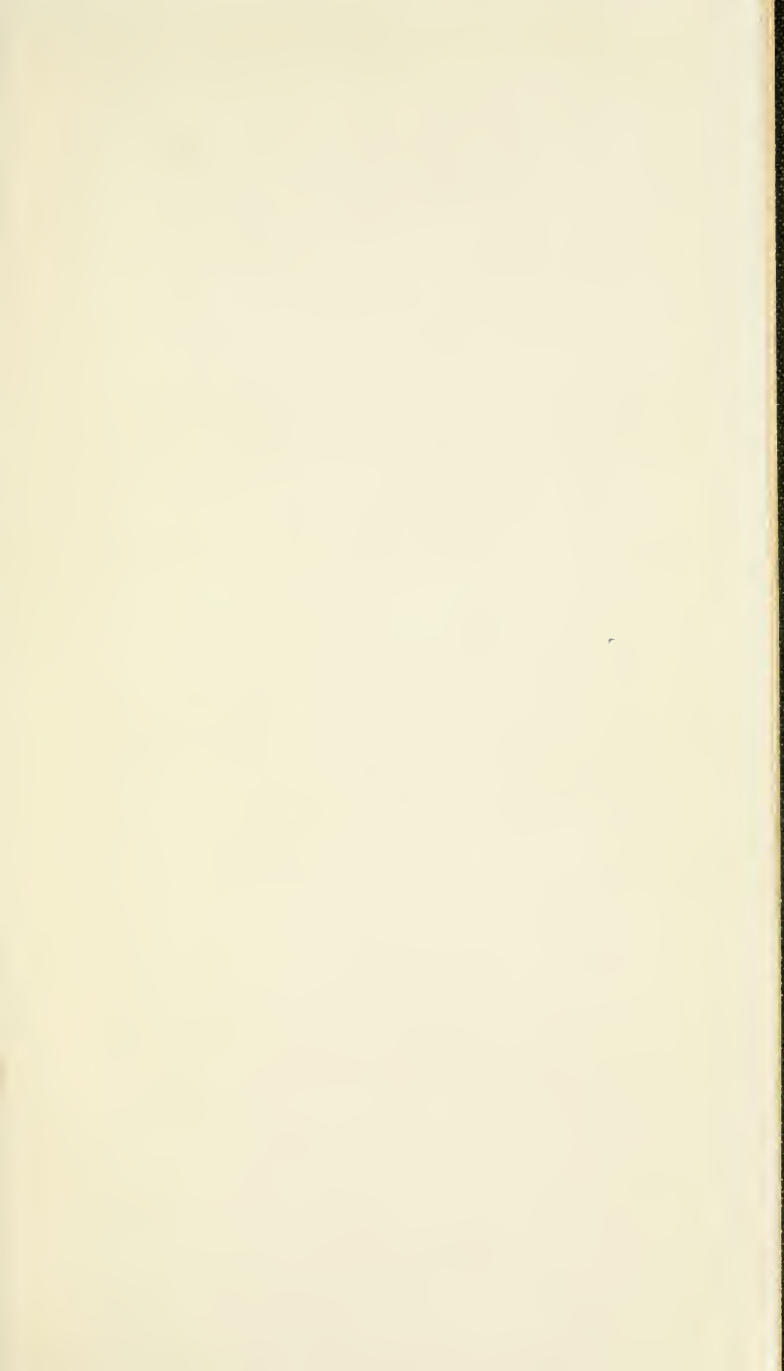
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A lecture delivered at the close of
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As students in this Summer's School of Theology you have attended a series of lectures on fluctuations in religious interest, on the frequent occurrence of religious declines followed soon by recoveries or regenerations both within and without the churches, on the frequent attempts to bring the prevalent religious doctrines into harmony with new tendencies in the intellectual world, on the constant struggle between conservatism and liberalism in existing churches and between idealism and materialism in society at large, on the effects of popu-

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lar education and the modern spirit of inquiry on religious doctrines and organizations, on the changed views of thinking people concerning the nature of the world and of man, on the increase of knowledge as affecting religion, and on the new ideas of God. You have also listened to lectures on psychotherapy, a new development of an ancient tendency to mix religion with medicine, and on the theory of evolution, a modern scientific doctrine which within fifty years has profoundly modified the religious conceptions and expectations of many thinking people. You have heard, too, how the new ideas of democracy and social progress have modified and ought to modify not only the actual work done by

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the churches, but the whole conception of the functions of churches. Again, you have heard how many and how profound are the religious implications in contemporary philosophy. Your attention has been called to the most recent views concerning the conservation of energy in the universe, to the wonderful phenomena of radio-activity, and to the most recent definitions of atom, molecule, ion, and electron—human imaginings which have much to do with the modern conceptions of matter and spirit. The influence on popular religion of modern scholarship applied to the New Testament has also engaged your attention; and, finally, you have heard an exposition of religious conditions and

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practices in the United States which assumed an intimate connection between the advance of civilization and the contemporaneous aspects of religions, and illustrated from history the service of religion—and practically of Christianity—to the progress of civilization through its contributions to individual freedom, intellectual culture, and social co-operation.

The general impression you have received from this comprehensive survey must surely be that religion is not a fixed, but a fluent thing. It is, therefore, wholly natural and to be expected that the conceptions of religion prevalent among educated people should change from century to century. Modern studies in

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comparative religion and in the history of religions demonstrate that such has been the case in times past. Now the nineteenth century immeasurably surpassed all preceding centuries in the increase of knowledge, and in the spread of the spirit of the scientific inquiry and of the passion for truth-seeking. Hence the changes in religious beliefs and practices, and in the relation of churches to human society as a whole, were much deeper and more extensive in that century than ever before in the history of the world; and the approach made to the embodiment in the actual practices of mankind of the doctrines of the greatest religious teachers was more significant and more rapid than ever before.

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The religion of a multitude of humane persons in the twentieth century may, therefore, be called without inexcusable exaggeration a "new religion,"—not that a single one of its doctrines and practices is really new in essence, but only that the wider acceptance and better actual application of truths familiar in the past at many times and places, but never taken to heart by the multitude or put in force on a large scale, are new. I shall attempt to state without reserve and in simplest terms free from technicalities, first, what the religion of the future seems likely not to be, and secondly what it may reasonably be expected to be. My point of view is that of an American layman, whose observing and thinking life

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has covered the extraordinary period since the *Voyage of the Beagle* was published, anaesthesia and the telegraph came into use, Herbert Spencer issued his first series of papers on evolution, Kuenen, Robertson Smith, and Wellhausen developed and vindicated Biblical criticism, J. S. Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* appeared, and the United States by going to war with Mexico set in operation the forces which abolished slavery on the American continent—the period within which mechanical power came to be widely distributed through the explosive engine and the applications of electricity, and all the great fundamental industries of civilized mankind were reconstructed.

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(1) The religion of the future will not be based on authority, either spiritual or temporal. The decline of the reliance upon absolute authority is one of the most significant phenomena of the modern world. This decline is to be seen everywhere,—in government, in education, in the church, in business, and in the family. The present generation is willing, and indeed often eager, to be led; but it is averse to being driven, and it wants to understand the grounds and sanctions of authoritative decisions. As a rule, the Christian churches, Roman, Greek, and Protestant, have heretofore relied mainly upon the principle of authority, the Reformation having substituted for an authoritative church an

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authoritative book; but it is evident that the authority both of the most authoritative churches and of the Bible as a verbally inspired guide is already greatly impaired, and that the tendency towards liberty is progressive, and among educated men irresistible.

(2) It is hardly necessary to say that in the religion of the future there will be no personifications of the primitive forces of nature, such as light, fire, frost, wind, storm, and earthquake, although primitive religions and the actual religions of barbarous or semi-civilized peoples abound in such personifications. The mountains, groves, volcanoes, and oceans will no longer be inhabited by either kindly or malevolent deities; although

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man will still look to the hills for rest, still find in the ocean a symbol of infinity, and refreshment and delight in the forests and the streams. The love of nature mounts and spreads, while faith in fairies, imps, nymphs, demons, and angels declines and fades away.

(3) There will be in the religion of the future no worship, express or implied, of dead ancestors, teachers, or rulers; no more tribal, racial, or tutelary gods; no identification of any human being, however majestic in character, with the Eternal Deity. In these respects the religion of the future will not be essentially new, for nineteen centuries ago Jesus said, "Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the

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Father....God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." It should be recognized, however, first, that Christianity was soon deeply affected by the surrounding paganism, and that some of these pagan intrusions have survived to this day; and secondly, that the Hebrew religion, the influence of which on the Christian has been, and is, very potent, was in the highest degree a racial religion, and its Holy of Holies was local. In war-times, that is, in times when the brutal or savage instincts remaining in humanity became temporarily dominant, and good-will is limited to people of the same nation, the survival of a tribal or national quality in institutional Christianity comes out very

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plainly. The aid of the Lord of Hosts is still invoked by both parties to international warfare, and each side praises and thanks Him for its successes. Indeed, the same spirit has often been exhibited in civil wars caused by religious differences.

“Now glory to the Lord of Hosts, from
whom all glories are!
And glory to our sovereign liege, King
Henry of Navarre!”

It is not many years since an Archbishop of Canterbury caused thanks to be given in all Anglican churches that the Lord of Hosts had been in the English camp over against the Egyptians. Heretofore the great religions of the world have held out hopes of direct interven-

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tions of the deity, or some special deity, in favor of his faithful worshippers. It was the greatest Jewish prophet who told King Hezekiah that the King of Assyria, who had approached Jerusalem with a great army, should not come into the city nor shoot an arrow there, and reported the Lord as saying, "I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake." "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four-score and five thousand; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." The new religion cannot promise that sort of aid to either nations or individuals in peril.

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(4) In the religious life of the future the primary object will not be the personal welfare or safety of the individual in this world or any other. That safety, that welfare or salvation, may be incidentally secured, but it will not be the prime object in view. The religious person will not think of his own welfare or security, but of service to others, and of contributions to the common good. The new religion will not teach that character is likely to be suddenly changed, either in this world or in any other,—although in any world a sudden opportunity for improvement may present itself, and the date of that opportunity may be a precious remembrance. The new religion will not rely on either a sudden conver-

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sion in this world or a sudden paradise in the next, from out a sensual, selfish, or dishonest life. It will teach that repentance wipes out nothing in the past, and is only the first step towards reformation, and a sign of a better future.

(5) The religion of the future will not be propitiatory, sacrificial, or expiatory. In primitive society fear of the supernal powers, as represented in the awful forces of nature, was the root of religion. These dreadful powers must be propitiated or placated, and they must be propitiated by sacrifices in the most literal sense; and the supposed offences of man must be expiated by sufferings, which were apt to be vicarious. Even the Hebrews offered human sacrifices

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for generations; and always a great part of their religious rites consisted in sacrifices of animals. The Christian church made a great step forward when it substituted the burning of incense for the burning of bullocks and doves; but to this day there survives not only in the doctrines but in the practices of the Christian church the principle of expiatory sacrifice. It will be an immense advance if the twentieth-century Christianity can be purified from all these survivals of barbarous, or semi-barbarous, religious conceptions, because they imply such an unworthy idea of God.

(6) The religion of the future will not perpetuate the Hebrew anthropomorphic representations of God, conceptions

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which were carried in a large measure into institutional Christianity. It will not think of God as an enlarged and glorified man, who walks "in the garden in the cool of the day," or as a judge deciding between human litigants, or as a king, Pharaoh, or emperor, ruling arbitrarily his subjects, or as the patriarch who, in the early history of the race, ruled his family absolutely. These human functions will cease to represent adequately the attributes of God. The nineteenth century has made all these conceptions of deity look archaic and crude.

(7) The religion of the future will not be gloomy, ascetic, or maledictory. It will not deal chiefly with sorrow and death, but with joy and life. It will not

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care so much to account for the evil and the ugly in the world as to interpret the good and the beautiful. It will believe in no malignant powers—neither in Satan nor in witches, neither in the evil eye nor in the malign suggestion. When its disciple encounters a wrong or evil in the world, his impulse will be to search out its origin, source, or cause, that he may attack it at its starting-point. He may not speculate on the origin of evil in general, but will surely try to discover the best way to eradicate the particular evil or wrong he has recognized.

Having thus considered what the religion of the future will not be, let us now consider what its positive elements will be.

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The new thought of God will be its most characteristic element. This ideal will comprehend the Jewish Jehovah, the Christian Universal Father, the modern physicist's omnipresent and exhaustless Energy, and the biological conception of a Vital Force. The Infinite Spirit pervades the universe, just as the spirit of a man pervades his body, and acts, consciously or unconsciously, in every atom of it. The twentieth century will accept literally and implicitly St. Paul's statement, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," and God is that vital atmosphere, or incessant inspiration. The new religion is therefore thoroughly monotheistic, its God being the one in-

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finite force; but this one God is not withdrawn or removed, but indwelling, and especially dwelling in every living creature. God is so absolutely immanent in all things, animate and inanimate, that no mediation is needed between him and the least particle of his creation. In his moral attributes, he is for every man the multiplication to infinity of all the noblest, tenderest, and most potent qualities which that man has ever seen or imagined in a human being. In this sense every man makes his own picture of God. Every age, barbarous or civilized, happy or unhappy, improving or degenerating, frames its own conception of God within the limits of its own experiences and imaginings. In this sense, too, a humane

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religion has to wait for a humane generation. The central thought of the new religion will therefore be a humane and worthy idea of God, thoroughly consistent with the nineteenth-century revelations concerning man and nature, and with all the tenderest and loveliest teachings which have come down to us from the past.

The scientific doctrine of one omnipresent, eternal Energy, informing and inspiring the whole creation at every instant of time and throughout the infinite spaces, is fundamentally and completely inconsistent with the dualistic conception which sets spirit over against matter, good over against evil, man's wickedness against God's righteousness, and Satan

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against Christ. The doctrine of God's immanence is also inconsistent with the conception that he once set the universe a-going, and then withdrew, leaving the universe to be operated under physical laws, which were his vicegerents or substitutes. If God is thoroughly immanent in the entire creation, there can be no "secondary causes," in either the material or the spiritual universe. The new religion rejects absolutely the conception that man is an alien in the world, or that God is alienated from the world. It rejects also the entire conception of man as a fallen being, hopelessly wicked, and tending downward by nature; and it makes this emphatic rejection of long-accepted beliefs because it finds them all

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inconsistent with a humane, civilized, or worthy idea of God.

If, now, man discovers God through self-conscious, or, in other words, if it is the human soul through which God is revealed the race has come to the knowledge of God through knowledge of itself; and the best knowledge of God comes through knowledge of the best of the race. Men have always attributed to man a spirit distinct from his body, though immanent in it. No one of us is willing to identify himself with his body; but on the contrary every one now believes, and all men have believed, that there is in a man an animating, ruling, characteristic essence, or spirit, which is himself. The spirit, dull or bright, petty

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or grand, pure or foul, looks out of the eyes, sounds in the voice, and appears in the bearing and manners of each individual. It is something just as real as the body, and more characteristic. To every influential person it gives far the greater part of his power. It is what we call the personality. This spirit, or soul, is the most effective part of every human being, and is recognized as such, and always has been. It can use a fine body more effectively than it can a poor body, but it can do wonders through an inadequate body. In the crisis of a losing battle, it is a human soul that rallies the flying troops. It looks out of flashing eyes, and speaks in ringing tones, but it appeals to other souls, and not to other bodies. In the

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midst of terrible natural catastrophes,—earthquakes, storms, conflagrations, volcanic eruptions,—when men's best works are being destroyed and thousands of lives are ceasing suddenly and horribly, it is not a few especially good human bodies which steady the survivors, maintain order, and organize the forces of rescue and relief. It is a few superior souls. The leading men and women in any society, savage or civilized, are the strongest personalities,—the personality being primarily spiritual, and only secondarily bodily. Recognizing to the full these simple and obvious facts, the future religion will pay homage to all righteous and loving persons who in the past have exemplified, and made in-

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telligible to their contemporaries intrinsic goodness and effluent good-will. It will be an all-saints religion. It will treasure up all tales of human excellence and virtue. It will reverence the discoverers, teachers, martyrs, and apostles of liberty, purity, and righteousness. It will respect and honor all strong and lovely human beings,—seeing in them in finite measure qualities similar to those which they adore in God. Recognizing in every great and lovely human person an individual will-power which is the essence of the personality, it will naturally and inevitably attribute to God a similar individual will-power, the essence of his infinite personality. In this simple and natural faith there will be no place for

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metaphysical complexities or magical rites, much less for obscure dogmas, the result of compromises in turbulent conventions. It is anthropomorphic; but what else can a human view of God's personality be? The finite can study and describe the infinite only through analogy, parallelism, and simile; but that is a good way. The new religion will animate and guide ordinary men and women who are putting into practice religious conceptions which result directly from their own observation and precious experience of tenderness, sympathy, trust, and solemn joy. It will be most welcome to the men and women who cherish and exhibit incessant, all-comprehending good-will. These are

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the “good” people. These are the only genuinely civilized persons.

To the wretched, sick, and downtrodden of the earth, religion has in the past held out hopes of future compensation. When precious ties of affection have been broken, religion has held out prospects of immediate and eternal blessings for the departed; and has promised happy reunions in another and a better world. To a human soul, lodged in an imperfect, feeble, or suffering body, some of the older religions have held out the expectation of deliverance by death, and of entrance upon a rich, competent, and happy life,—in short for present human ills, however crushing, the widely accepted religions have offered

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either a second life, presumably immortal, under the happiest conditions, or at least peace, rest, and a happy oblivion. Can the future religion promise that sort of compensation for the ills of this world, any more that it can promise miraculous aid against threatened disaster? A candid reply to this inquiry involves the statement that in the future religion there will be nothing "supernatural." This does not mean that life will be stripped of mystery or wonder, or that the range of natural law has been finally determined; but that religion, like all else, must conform to natural law so far as the range of law has been determined. In this sense the religion of the future will be a natural religion. In

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all its theory and all its practice it will be completely natural. It will place no reliance on any sort of magic, or miracle, or other violation of, or exception to, the laws of nature. It will perform no magical rites, use no occult processes, count on no abnormal interventions of supernatural powers, and admit no possession of supernatural gifts, whether transmitted or conferred, by any tribe, class, or family of men. Its sacraments will be, not invasions of law by miracle, but the visible signs of a natural spiritual grace, or of a natural hallowed custom. It may preserve historical rites and ceremonies, which, in times past, have represented the expectation of magical or miraculous effects; but it will be con-

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tent with natural interpretations of such rites and ceremonies. Its priests will be men especially interested in religious thought, possessing unusual gifts of speech on devotional subjects, and trained in the best methods of improving the social and industrial conditions of human life. There will always be need of such public teachers and spiritual leaders, heralds, and prophets. It should be observed, however, that many happenings and processes which were formerly regarded as supernatural have, with the increase of knowledge come to be regarded as completely natural. The line between the supposed natural and the supposed supernatural is, therefore, not fixed but changeable.

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It is obvious, therefore, that the completely natural quality of the future religion excludes from it many of the religious compensations and consolations of the past. Twentieth-century soldiers, going into battle, will not be able to say to each other, as Moslem soldiers did in the tenth century, "If we are killed today, we shall meet again tonight in Paradise." Even now, the mother who loses her babe, or the husband his wife, by a preventable disease, is seldom able to say, simply, "It is the will of God! The babe—or the woman—is better off in heaven than on earth. I resign this dear object of love and devotion, who has gone to a happier world." The ordinary consolations of institutional Christianity no

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longer satisfy intelligent people whose lives are broken by the sickness or premature death of those they love. The new religion will not attempt to reconcile men and women to present ills by promises of future blessedness, either for themselves or for others. Such promises have done infinite mischief in the world, by inducing men to be patient under sufferings or deprivations against which they should have incessantly struggled. The advent of a just freedom for the mass of mankind has been delayed for centuries by just this effect of compensatory promises issued by churches.

The religion of the future will approach the whole subject of evil from another side, that of resistance and preven-

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tion. The Breton sailor, who had had his arm poisoned by a dirty fish hook which had entered his finger, made a votive offering at the shrine of the Virgin Mary, and prayed for a cure. The workman today, who gets cut or bruised by a rough or dirty instrument, goes to a surgeon, who applies an antiseptic dressing to the wound, and prevents the poisoning. That surgeon is one of the ministers of the new religion. When dwellers in a slum suffer the familiar evils caused by overcrowding, impure food, and cheerless labor, the modern true believers contend against the sources of such misery by providing public baths, playgrounds, wider and cleaner streets, better dwellings, and more effective schools,—that is, they attack the

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sources of physical and moral evil. The new religion cannot supply the old sort of consolation; but it can diminish the need of consolation, or reduce the number of occasions for consolation.

A further change in religious thinking has already occurred on the subject of human pain. Pain was generally regarded as a punishment for sin, or as a means of moral training, or as an expiation, vicarious or direct. Twentieth-century religion, gradually perfected in this respect during the last half of the nineteenth century, regards human pain as an evil to be relieved and prevented by the promptest means possible, and by any sort of available means, physical, mental or moral; and, thanks to the progress of biological and chemical science,

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there is comparatively little physical pain nowadays which cannot be prevented or relieved. The invention of anaesthetics has brought into contempt the expiatory, or penal, view of human pain in this world. The younger generations listen with incredulous smiles to the objection made only a little more than sixty years ago by some divines of the Scottish Presbyterian church to the employment of chloroform in childbirth, namely, that the physicians were interfering with the execution of a curse pronounced by the Almighty. Dr. Weir Mitchell, a physician who has seen much of mental pain as well as of bodily, in his poem read at the fiftieth anniversary of the first public demonstration of surgical anaesthesia, said of pain:

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“What purpose hath it? Nay, thy quest
is vain:

Earth hath no answer: If the baffled brain
Cries, ‘Tis to warn, to punish, Ah, refrain!
When writhes the child, beneath the sur-
geon’s hand,

What soul shall hope that pain to under-
stand?

Lo! Science falters o’er the hopeless task,
And Love and Faith in vain an answer ask.”

A similar change is occurring in regard to the conception of divine justice. The evils in this world have been regarded as penalties inflicted by a just God on human beings who had violated his laws; and the justice of God played a great part in his imagined dealings with the human race. A young graduate of Andover Theological Seminary once told me that when he had preached two or three times in summer in a small Congregational church on Cape Cod, one of the

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deacons of the church said to him at the close of the service, "What sort of sentimental mush is this that they are teaching you at Andover? You talk every Sunday about the love of God; we want to hear about his justice." The future religion will not undertake to describe, or even imagine, the justice of God. We are today so profoundly dissatisfied with human justice, although it is the result of centuries of experience of social good and ill in this world, that we may well distrust human capacity to conceive of the justice of a morally perfect, infinite being. The civilized nations now recognize the fact that legal punishments usually fail of their objects, or cause wrongs and evils greater than those for

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which the punishments were inflicted; so that penology, or the science of penalties, has still to be created. It is only very lately that the most civilized communities began to learn how to deal with criminal tendencies in the young. In the eyes of God human beings must all seem very young. Since our ideas of God's modes of thinking and acting are necessarily based on the best human attainments in similar directions, the new religion cannot pretend to understand God's justice, inasmuch as there is no human experience of public justice fit to serve as the foundation for a true conception of God's. The new religion will magnify and laud God's love and compassion, and will not venture to state

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what the justice of God may, or may not, require of himself, or of any of his finite creatures. This will be one of the great differences between the future religion and the past. Institutional Christianity as a rule condemned the mass of of mankind to eternal torment; partly because the leaders of the churches thought they understood completely the justice of God, and partly because the exclusive possession of means of deliverance gave the churches some restraining influence over even the boldest sinners, and much over the timid. The new religion will make no such pretensions, and will teach no such horrible and perverse doctrines.

Do you ask what consolation for hu-

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man ills the new religion will offer? I answer, the consolation which comes to answer, the consolation which often comes to the sufferer from being more serviceable to others than he was before the loss or the suffering for which consolation is needed; the consolation of being one's self wiser and tenderer than before, and therefore more able to be serviceable to human kind in the best ways; the consolation through the memory, which preserves the sweet fragrance of characters and lives no longer in presence, recalls the joys and achievements of those lives while still within mortal view, and treasures up and multiplies the good influences they exerted. Moreover, such a religion has no tendency to

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diminish the force in this world, or any other, of the best human imaginings concerning the nature of the infinite Spirit immanent in the universe. It urges its disciples to believe that as the best and happiest man is he who best loves and serves, so the soul of the universe finds its perfect bliss and efficiency in supreme and universal love and service. It sees evidence in the moral history of the human race that a loving God rules the universe. Trust in this supreme rule is genuine consolation and support under many human trials and sufferings. Nevertheless, although brave and patient endurance of evils is always admirable, and generally happier than timid or impatient conduct under suffering or wrong,

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it must be admitted that endurance or constancy is not consolation, and that there are many physical and mental disabilities and injuries for which there is no consolation in a literal sense. Human skill may mitigate or palliate some of them, human sympathy and kindness may make them more bearable, but neither religion nor philosophy offers any complete consolation for them, or ever has.

In thus describing the consolations for human woes and evils which such a religion can offer, its chief motives have been depicted. They are just those which Jesus said summed up all the commandments, love toward God and brotherliness to man. It will teach a universal good-will under the influence

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of which men will do their duty, and at the same time, promote their own happiness. The devotees of a religion of service will always be asking what they can contribute to the common good; but their greatest service must always be to increase the stock of good-will among men. One of the worst of chronic human evils is working for daily bread without any interest in the work, and with ill-will towards the institution or person that provides the work. The work of the world must be done; and the great question is, shall it be done happily or unhappily? Much of it is today done unhappily. The new religion will contribute powerfully toward the reduction of this mass of unneces-

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sary misery, and will do so chiefly by promoting good-will among men.

A paganized Hebrew-Christianity has unquestionably made much of personal sacrifice as a religious duty. The new religion will greatly qualify the supposed duty of sacrifice, and will regard all sacrifices as unnecessary and injurious, except those which love dictates and justifies. "Greater *love* hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Self-sacrifice is not a good or a merit in itself; it must be intelligent and loving to be meritorious, and the object in view must be worth its price. Giving up attractive pleasures or labors in favor of some higher satisfaction, or some engrossing work, is not

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self-sacrifice. It is a renunciation of inferior or irrelevant objects in favor of one superior object; it is only the intelligent inhibition of whatever distracts from the main pursuit, or the worthiest task. Here, again, the new religion will teach that happiness goes with dutifulness even in this world.

All the religions have been, to a greater or less extent, uplifting and inspiring, in the sense that they raised men's thoughts to some power above them, to some being or beings, which had more power and more duration than the worshippers had. When kings or emperors were deified, they were idealized, and so lifted men's thoughts out of the daily round of their ordinary lives. As the

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objects of worship became nobler, purer, and kinder with the progress of civilization, the prevailing religion became more stimulating to magnanimity and righteousness. Will the future religion be as helpful to the spirit of man? Will it touch his imagination as the anthropomorphism of Judaism, polytheism, Islam, and paganized Christianity have done? Can it be as moving to the human soul as the deified powers of nature, the various gods and goddesses that inhabited sky, ocean, mountains, groves and streams, or the numerous deities, revered in the various Christian communions,— God the Father, the Son of God, the Mother of God, the Holy Ghost, and the host of tutelary saints? All

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these objects of worship have greatly moved the human soul, and have inspired men to thoughts and deeds of beauty, love, and duty. Will the new religion do as much? It is reasonable to expect that it will. The sentiments of awe and reverence, and the love of beauty and goodness, will remain, and will increase in strength and influence. All the natural human affections will remain in full force. The new religion will foster powerfully a virtue which is comparatively new in the world—the love of truth and the passion for seeking it, and the truth will progressively make men free; so that the coming generations will be freer, and therefore more productive and stronger than the preceding. The

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new religionists will not worship their ancestors; but they will have a stronger sense of the descent of the present from the past than men have ever had before, and each generation will feel more strongly than ever before its indebtedness to the preceding.

The two sentiments which most inspire men to good deeds are love and hope. Religion should give freer and more rational play to these two sentiments than the world has heretofore witnessed; and the love and hope will be thoroughly grounded in and on efficient, serviceable, visible, actual, and concrete deeds and conduct. When a man works out a successful treatment for cerebro-spinal meningitis—a disease before which medicine

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was absolutely helpless a dozen years ago —by applying to the discovery of a remedy ideas and processes invented or developed by other men studying other diseases, he does a great work of love, prevents for the future the breaking of innumerable ties of love, and establishes good grounds for hope of many like benefits for human generations to come. The men who do such things in the present world are ministers of the religion of the future. The future religion will prove, has proved, as effective as any of the older ones in inspiring men to love and serve their fellow-beings,—and that is the true object and end of all philosophies and all religions; for that is the way to make men better and happier, alike the servants and the served.

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The future religion will have the attributes of universality and of adaptability to the rapidly increasing stores of knowledge and power over nature acquired by the human race. As the religion of a child is inevitably very different from that of an adult, and must grow up with the child, so the religion of a race whose capacities are rapidly enlarging must be capable of a corresponding development. The religion of any single individual ought to grow up with him all the way from infancy to age; and the same is true of the religion of a race. It is bad for any people to stand still in their governmental conceptions and practices, or in the organiza-

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and teachers, of men with one another, of men's intelligence with the forces of nature. It will teach only such uses of authority as are necessary to secure the co-operation of several or many people to one end; and the discipline it will advocate will be training in the development of co-operative good-will.

Will such a religion as this make progress in the twentieth-century world? You have heard in this Summer School of Theology much about the conflict between materialism and religious idealism, the revolt against long-accepted dogmas, the frequent occurrence of waves of reform, sweeping through and sometimes over the churches, the effect of modern philosophy, ethical theories, soc-

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ial hopes, and democratic principles on the established churches, and the abandonment of churches altogether by a large proportion of the population in countries mainly Protestant. You know, too, how other social organizations have, in some considerable measure, taken the place of churches. Millions of Americans find in Masonic organizations, lodges of Odd Fellows, benevolent and fraternal societies, granges, and trade-unions, at once their practical religion, and the satisfaction of their social needs. So far as these multifarious organizations carry men and women out of their individual selves and teach them mutual regard and social and industrial co-operation, they approach the field and func-

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tions of the religion of the future. The Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, and mental healers of all sorts manifest a good deal of ability to draw people away from the traditional churches, and to discredit traditional dogmas and formal creeds. Nevertheless, the great mass of the people remain attached to the traditional churches, and are likely to remain so,—partly because of their tender associations with churches in the grave crises of life, and partly because their actual mental condition still permits them to accept the beliefs they have inherited or been taught while young. The new religion will therefore make but slow progress, so far as outward organization goes. It will, however, progressively modify

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the creeds and religious practices of all the existing churches, and change their symbolism and their teachings concerning the conduct of life. Since its chief doctrine is the doctrine of a sublime unity of substance, force, and spirit, and its chief precept is, Be serviceable, it will exert a strong, united influence among men.

Christian unity has always been longed for by devout believers, but has been sought in impossible ways. Authoritative churches have tried to force everybody within their range to hold the same opinions and unite in the same observances, but they have won only temporary and local successes. As freedom has increased in the world, it has become more

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and more difficult to enforce even outward conformity; and in countries where church and state have been separated, a great diversity of religious opinions and practices has been expressed in different religious organizations, each of which commands the effective devotion of a fraction of the population. Since it is certain that men are steadily gaining more and more freedom in thought, speech, and action, civilized society might as well assume that it will be quite impossible to unite all religiously-minded people through any dogma, creed, ceremony, observance, or ritual. All these are divisive, not uniting, wherever a reasonable freedom exists. The new religion proposes as a basis of unity, first,

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its doctrine of an immanent and loving God, and secondly, its precept, Be serviceable to fellow-men. Already there are many signs in the free countries of the world that different religious denominations can unite in good work to promote human welfare. The support of hospitals, dispensaries, and asylums by persons connected with all sorts of religious denominations, the union of all denominations in carrying on Associated Charities in large cities, the success of the Young Men's Christian Associations, and the numerous efforts to form federations of kindred churches for practical purposes, all testify to the feasibility of extensive co-operation in good works. Again, the new religion cannot create

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any caste, ecclesiastical class, or exclusive sect founded on a rite. On these grounds it is not unreasonable to imagine that the new religion will prove a unifying influence, and a strong reinforcement of democracy.

Whether it will prove as efficient to deter men from doing wrong and to encourage them to do right as the prevailing religions have been, is a question which only experience can answer. In these two respects neither the threats nor the promises of the older religions have been remarkably successful in society at large. The fear of hell has not proved effective to deter men from wrong-doing, and heaven has never yet been described in terms very attractive to the average

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man or woman. Both are indeed unimaginable. The great geniuses, like Dante and Swedenborg, have produced only fantastic and incredible pictures of either state. The modern man would hardly feel any appreciable loss of motive-power toward good or away from evil if heaven were burnt and hell quenched. The prevailing Christian conceptions of heaven and hell have hardly any more influence with educated people in these days than Olympus and Hades have. The modern mind craves an immediate motive or leading, good for today on this earth. The new religion builds on the actual experience of men and women, and of human society as a whole. The motive powers it relies

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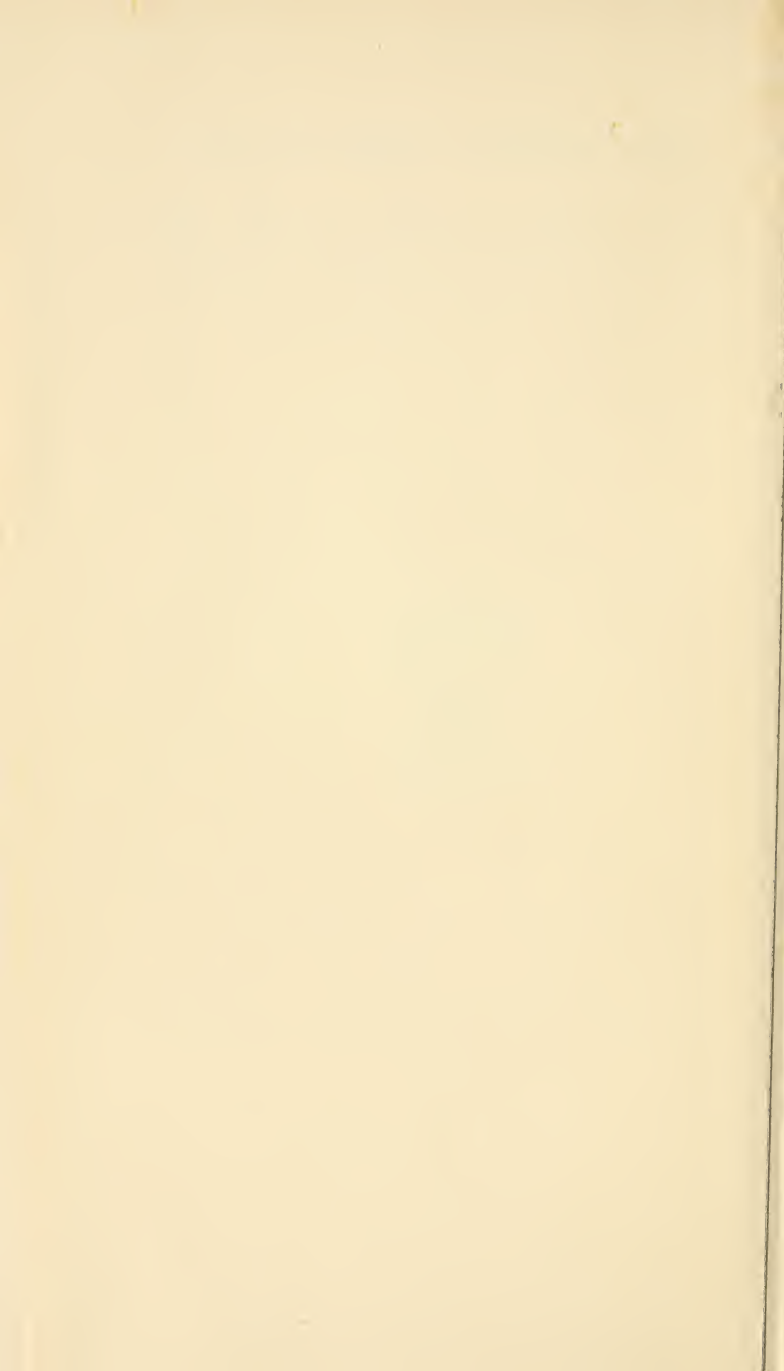
on have been, and are, at work in innumerable human lives; and its beatific visions and its hopes are better grounded than those of traditional religion, and finer,—because free from all selfishness, and from the imagery of governments, courts, social distinctions, and war.

Finally, this twentieth-century religion is not only to be in harmony with the great secular movements of modern society—democracy, individualism, social idealism, the zeal for education, the spirit of research, the modern tendency to welcome the new, the fresh powers of preventive medicine, and the recent advances in business and industrial ethics—but also in essential agreement with the direct, personal teachings of Jesus, as

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they are reported in the Gospels. The revelation he gave to mankind thus becomes more wonderful than ever.







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